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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: Taipei dailies' April 21 coverage of the forthcoming China visits by KMT Chairman Lien Chan and PFP Chairman James Soong focused on Lien's and KMT Secretary-General Lin Feng-cheng's remarks Wednesday

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that both sides of the Strait have been ruled separately. The centrist "China Times" carried a banner headline on its second page that said: "Lien Chan: [the fact that] both sides of the Taiwan Strait are ruled separately will be the keynote for Lien's meeting with [Chinese President] Hu Jintao." A front-page news story of the pro-unification "United Daily News" and a page-three news story of the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" also reported that Lien Chan will mention the fact that both sides of the Strait have been ruled separately during his trip to China.

2. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, carried a news story on its second page that said: "The United States does not want to see Taiwan split because of Lien's and Soong's visits to China." The sub-headline added: "[U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State] Randy Schriver said the United States will watch the results of Lien's and Soong's visits to China and their impact on Taiwan's domestic politics." A "Liberty Times" news analysis said on the same page that Schriver's remarks have cleared up Washington's ambiguous position and have thrown cold water on Lien and Soong because Washington thinks that it will add more variables to the cross-strait relations if China only communicates with Taiwan's opposition parties. The centrist "China Times," however, covered Schriver's remarks from a different angle. The "China Times" reported on page two that Schriver said "Beijing will have to engage in a dialogue with the Taiwan authorities in the end after all," and the sub-headline said: "The results of the opposition party leaders' visits to China are yet unknown, but Washington's position is 'to talk is better than not to talk.'" A "China Times" commentary sought to analyze the significance of the term "Republic of China" with regard to Lien's and Soong's visits, saying that these visits have highlighted the fact that Beijing would rather step back and accept the "ROC" than watch Taiwan move forward to become "the Republic of Taiwan." End summary.

"The 'Republic of China' Emerges in Lien's and Soong's Visits to China"

Journalist Hsiao Hsu-tsen commented in the "My Views" column of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] (4/21):

"[KMT Chairman] Lien Chan and [PFP Chairman] James Soong will visit China in succession as guests of Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Secretary-General Hu Jintao. These visits can indeed be viewed as major events in the history of cross-strait interaction, and its political significance is more important than that of the two meetings between [former Straits Exchange Foundation Chairman] C.F. Koo and China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait Wang Chairman Daohan. The focus of Lien's first-ever visit to China is its historical significance and the ice-breaking atmosphere. Soong will visit China on Lien's heels, and given the foundation of the [10-point] consensus reached by Soong and President Chen and the four-point talks by Hu [in early March], his visit has kind of demonstrated the 'indistinct dialogue' flavor between the leaders of both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

"There is another aspect of major significance that can be observed from the signals sent out with regard to Lien's and Soong's visits: under the joint tacit agreement between the KMT and CCP to maintain a low-profile manner [with regard to Lien's visit to China], the word 'Republic of China' has silently emerged onto the platform of cross-strait dialogue. Beijing's new way of thinking and its flexibility are evident as

demonstrated by [China's People's Political Consultative Committee Chairman] Jia Qinglin's mention of the 'Republic of China' March 31 and his words that 'ROC and the PRC are two separate teams under a single brand' to the breakthrough that Lien can step foot on mainland China using his ROC passport. .

"Lien and Soong both see the 'ROC' as a bottom line for all political views. If Beijing can put aside the 'one China syllogism' as mentioned in [former Chinese President] Jiang Zemin's eight-points and is willing to acknowledge the 'ROC' in an indirect and implicit way, chances for both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resume dialogue will be greatly increased.

"Given such a foundation, Lien's and Soong's upcoming visits to China have highlighted [a fact] that Beijing would rather step back and accept the 'ROC' than watch Taiwan move forward to become 'the Republic of Taiwan.' This development may be seen as additional splendor for the Pan-Blue camp that has always upheld the constitution and national title of the ROC. But for President Chen Shui-bian's DPP government, it is a ball thrown out by China that is most difficult to catch. It depends on Chen's wisdom [to determine] how to catch such a ball."

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